

MINUTES

SPECIAL MEETING OF
CITY OF ALAMEDA ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION
JOINT MEETING WITH THE PLANNING BOARD
THURSDAY, JULY 15, 2010
7:00 PM

(Meeting was held at Otaez Mexican Restaurant, 1619 Webster Street)

CALL TO ORDER AND ROLL CALL

Planning Board President Ashcraft called the meeting to order at 7:14 p.m.

EDC Members Present: Chair Bonta. Commission Members: Dahlberg, Harrison (arrived at 7:16 p.m.), and Ryan,

EDC Members Absent: Commission Members: Breuer, Lindsey, McKean, and Reeves

Vacancies: (1)

EDC Staff: Eric Fonstein and Rosemary Valeska

Andrew Thomas of the Planning Division introduced the Webster Street Visioning consultant team (Urban Design Associates and Urban Community Partners).

The consultants had interviewed stakeholders and met with the public during the open house sessions on July 13 and 14. That input, along with the comments from this meeting and the August WABA board meeting, will be crafted into a final recommendation to the City Council in September. The PowerPoint presentation given at this meeting will also be given to the WABA board in August.

Some key things the consultants heard in the interviews and open houses:

- Parking is a problem
- The development process is difficult
- Wayfinding signage is poor
- The gateway needs landscaping
- Parts of Webster are not bike and pedestrian friendly
- Lack of consistency along the street
- Need for public art
- Regret that the Neptune Beach tower was torn down
- The street is fragmented
- The quirky character of Webster needs to be preserved

Existing plans for Webster Street include:

- Days Inn mural
- Stargell Interchange
- Alameda Landing
- Completion of the Streetscapes to Atlantic Avenue
- Infill project and Webster and Pacific
- Beltline Linear Park

Coming soon:

- New restaurants under development at the former Tillie's and former Aquacotta
- New development at 76 station

The consultants determined that the 2005 EDAW study is no longer relevant. It had anticipated that Alameda Landing and Alameda Point would be underway by now and it did not anticipate the current recession.

The new Vision takes in everything between the Estuary and Crab Cove. The consultants identified four districts, which are characterized as follows:

- "The Gateway" – the Estuary to Appezzatto. Characterized by long blocks, institutional uses (College of Alameda, Independence Plaza), and high-speed traffic. There is dedicated off-street parking for uses.
- "The Avenue" – Appezzatto to Lincoln. Characterized by national brands, auto-oriented uses, fast food, and gas stations. Drive-thrus are located here.
- "Main Street" – Lincoln to Central Avenues. Traditional "Main Street" architecture. Features pedestrian-oriented uses, unique local shops, and shared parking.
- "The Anchor" – Central Avenue to Crab Cove – strip commercial uses (Neptune Plaza shopping center).

In terms of the "Civic Realm," almost everyone loves the streetscapes and agrees that they need to be completed. A slide was shown displaying how the streetscape provides an amenity zone at the curb (planting and benches), a clear zone for walking, and a marketing zone for the merchants.

Suggested menu of improvements:

- Extend Streetscape Project from Pacific to Atlantic Avenues.

- Provide traffic lights at Eagle, Pacific, Haight, and Taylor Avenues.
- Provide a pedestrian crossing at the Croll's Building.

There are multiple jurisdictions controlling the open space at the north end of Webster:

- Caltrans
- City of Alameda
- College of Alameda
- Alameda Landing
- Beltline
- Housing Authority
- U.S. Dept. of the Interior (Neptune Park)

There needs to be one united vision for this open space.

Suggested menu of improvements:

- Gateway land improvements
- Future Beltline Linear Park
- Extend the Streetscape Project
- Improved signage
- More public art

Parking

- There is a need for dedicated park-and-ride lots. Currently casual carpools are impacting the residential areas off Webster.
- The consultants will not be recommending a large parking garage on Webster, as they believe that parking needs to be more contextual, not suburban.

The College of Alameda needs to have a presence on the street. The consultants recommended that we look for ways to locate college uses (e.g., dance classes) on the street by using vacant storefronts. This has been done successfully in other parts of the country.

Utilize courtyards off the street like WesCafe.

8:14 p.m. – President Ashcraft opened the meeting to public speakers:

1. **Kathy Moehring**, WABA Executive Director, stated that Webster needs to be “set” before Alameda Point and Alameda Landing are developed. This is a small window of opportunity.
2. **Michael Jon Torrey** stated that it need to be made clear that the “no bikes and skating” signs painted on the sidewalk also pertain to rollerbladers and skateboarders. He also commended the recent streetscape improvements at the Webster Street U.S. post office.
3. **Jon Spangler**, Bike Alameda, commended the Farmers’ Markets and WesCafe and stated that we need more institutions like that. There should be a district established around Mariner Square Loop, Mariner Square Shopping Center, and the Mariner Square Athletic Club, and there needs to be transportation and economic integration. There needs to be improved bike and pedestrian access at Crab Cove, Washington Park, and Neptune Plaza – need to work on the “dead end.” Webster needs more residential above retail. He has never had a serious parking problem in the city. We need more bike racks.
4. **Tony Daysog** stated that he grew up in the West End and that there are all kinds of multi-cultural reminders surrounding his home on Haight Ave. The Planning Board and EDC need to keep that diversity in mind. We should look at higher density housing on Webster – that demographic would be a perfect fit, even if you have to change Measure A.
5. **Dr. Jeannette Jackson**, President, College of Alameda, stated that she was former military and had traveled extensively in Europe. People in the U.S. forget about the importance of “Main Street.” This vision plan should not be put on a shelf. She recommended the formation of a subcommittee comprised of members of WABA, EDC, and the Planning Board to develop action items.
6. **Karen Bey** stated that she lived on the West End for 16 years. The West End is a special place and will do what she can to see that this plan moves forward. Would like to see a land use for specialty grocers (e.g., Berkeley Bowl) and would like to get Noah’s Bagels back. She stated that she likes the idea of bringing back the Neptune Beach tower - we need a historic monument. Alameda has a very unique history. We should include the Neptune Gardens Apartments as part of a redevelopment project – that building has so much potential.
7. **Bruce Knopf** stated that he lives within three blocks of Webster Street and had worked several years for the City of Alameda. He stated that Park Street will make it on its own. The City focused on a catalyst project for Park about 15 years ago and that project was the renovation of the Alameda Theatre. Visioning (even if it is against Measure A) needs to think about things in a new way. Pressure staff. Ask questions about what

resources are available now. Ask where the dollars are now and do it regularly. This is a dialog – you will not leave with answers. You need to keep up the dialog. They do need to hear priorities. Ask EDC where the dollars are to be allocated to start the plan process for Webster, to do the most important three things. Need resources, time, and commitment to the process.

8. **Betty Dittmer**, who owns the business Alameda Sparkles, stated that for the last seven years, her company has maintained Webster Street and she has watched the street grow. She is seeing more families coming to Webster and using the amenity plazas. The Streetscapes need to be completed, and then we will get the college students to come to Webster.
9. **Kevin Frederick**, Peralta student, stated that he is on Webster Street almost every day. The Alameda Tube has been neglected for years. Go to alamedainfo.com and you will see the postcards showing how the Posey Tube used to look with the viewing glass. Caltrans should bring the glass back. When you come out of the Webster Tube, the chain link fence around the island area looks bad. We should think of the history of Webster Street. He stated that he supports the Webster Street merchants. He would like to bring back the Neptune Beach Tower. We need better access to the beach.

8:50 p.m. – President Ashcraft passed around the mike for Planning Board and EDC Member comments.

1. **Alan Ryan – EDC**. He stated that he used to live on Santa Clara Avenue. He likes the Crab Cove concerts and coming back to Nations. We need to keep up what has been started.
2. **Harry Dahlberg – EDC**. Thanked everyone for a great vision of the future.
3. **Patrick Lynch – Planning Board**. He stated that this is not a plan – it is an idea to stimulate the production of a plan. Need to have break-out groups. Need to be aware of how redevelopment financing works. The Planning Board should produce all land use documents. The City should provide the documents regarding redevelopment showing what can and can't be done. The role of private property owners is critical. Walnut Creek was developed using eminent domain. What is your responsibility to the greater community when you own commercial property?
4. **Lorre Zuppan – Planning Board**. Has seen changes on Webster for the better and cited façade assistance program projects such as WesCafe. We need to follow through and figure out where the dollars will come from.
5. **Rob Bonta – EDC Chair**. This is the start of something special. We need to invest in all of our business districts and in West Alameda. We should move the project forward.

6. **Justin Harrison – EDC.** Life-long West End resident. He thanked the consultants for these designs and also thanked Kathy Moehring for being the champion for this part of town. The residents have waited long enough to see this happen.
7. **Eric Ibsen – Planning Board.** As the new Planning Board Member, he is glad to be part of this at the onset.
8. **Rebecca Kohlstrand – Planning Board.** She stated that land use controls what can be changed right away. Parking requirements have done more to damage cities – there needs to be a more urban environment. In favor of talking about bringing in more housing and a mix of uses; in spite of Measure A, people keep mentioning it. Extend the Streetscapes to Atlantic. Better pedestrian connections to the water on either end of Webster are needed. Regarding the Stargell improvements, she would like to see more investment for transit and pedestrians. Does not want to see gateway arches on either end. On the north end, we need to reclaim the portal to the Tubes. On the south end, there could be an artistic representation of the Neptune Beach tower without reconstructing the tower. We need to bring the College of Alameda in as an active community member. This would help bring Webster Street to life. We should form a subcommittee comprised of representation from the Planning Board, EDC, College of Alameda, and possibly Catellus.
9. **Art Autorino – Planning Board.** He stated that he was very impressed with the amount of public input. Webster could be a destination street like Piedmont Avenue or College Avenue. We are looking to bring in people from other communities. He stated that he would like to recreate the tower. Cleaning up the Tube would be significant. Priority No. 1 is the completion of the Streetscapes – it makes a difference on Webster. Priority No. 2 is the Façade Assistance Program. We should work hard with businesses we think are going to stay and make them look great. He stated that he likes the idea of a subcommittee and volunteered to serve. He added that he never had a parking problem but if we are successful, he will. He likes the Farmers' Market; however, we need to find a way to make the market bigger, better, and more integrated.
10. **Marilyn Ezzy Ashcraft – Planning Board President.** She thanked Kathy Moehring, the WABA board, and the consultants. We need to get people out of their cars. We need more bike parking. We need a bike shop on Webster. A grocery/product market would make it more convenient for people to have picnics at Crab Cove. Maybe we do need to look at Measure A. We should think about the subcommittee. There should be quarterly updates to the Planning Board to keep this moving forward. Commended consultant Barry Long's ideas.

9:05 p.m. - President Ashcraft announced that this item was concluded and that there would be a break until 9:20 p.m., when the Alameda Landing presentation would begin.

9:20 p.m. – Alameda Landing presentation by Sean Whiskeman of Catellus. He stated that Target still wants to locate in Alameda. Catellus and Target have a “handshake agreement.” They are now looking at fall 2012. A lot of work would need to be done by then – demolition, clean-up, and infrastructure improvements. Catellus is looking at some high-end grocery stores. Catellus regards itself as part of WABA. Residential is becoming more viable. The Stargell/Alameda Landing intersection improvements make the connection to Webster more real. WABA had a momentum of lead time to encourage investment on Webster.

President Ashcraft announced that there were no public speaker slips. She then passed the microphone to Planning Board and EDC Members for their questions comments:

1. **Art Autorino – Planning Board.** He asked about office space and when was Catellus going to do something? Mr. Whiskeman responded 400,000 square feet of commercial/office was proposed for a half-mile of waterfront; however, the office market is currently “on its ear.” They are going to have to wait until the market improves. Mr. Whiskeman added that Catellus has over \$20 million invested in the project but owns only a small part of the land. There is a ten-month entitlement process, demolition phase 1 in 2011, and Target opening in 2012.

At this time, President Ashcraft announced that it had been brought to her attention that there were some public speaker slips submitted; therefore, she would open the floor to the public speakers:

1. **Tony Daysog.** In addition to a high-end grocery store, are you looking at other upscale retailers like Talbott’s or Ann Taylor? Mr. Whiskeman responded ideally, yes; however, this is market driven and Alameda is an island. Larger chains require more regional locations. Catellus will try for a Nordstrom Rack.
2. **Jon Spangler.** He asked when the water taxi would be operational. He also asked about the status of the pier that kept Clif Bar from coming to Alameda. There were promises about the water orientation of the businesses at Bridgeside – what about Alameda Landing? Mr. Whiskeman responded that the deck in question sits on a 4,000-foot pier that is on top of two feet of reinforced concrete. Need a retrofit to put the building on. Regarding the water taxi, Catellus wants ferry stops as part of the project and to create water-oriented businesses. The water taxi will come with a certain amount of density. President Ashcraft asked about the time frame for the pier work. Mr. Whiskeman responded that were

approaching the finish of that. President Ashcraft asked when we the Planning Board see Catellus again. Mr. Whiskeman responded in early 2011 for some project-wide approvals. He is willing to come back for project updates. He added that Catellus wants to be part of the visioning process.

3. **Kevin Frederick.** He stated that Alameda Landing is a better location for Target than Alameda Towne Centre. He asked if Catellus built the fence he had previously spoken about. Mr. Whiskeman responded that the fence was part of the Stargell redevelopment project.
4. **Kathy Moehring.** Thanked City staff and the consultant team. She added that WABA works closely with Catellus; they have a partnership and Catellus supports WABA events.

As there were no more speaker slips, the President Ashcraft returned to Board and Commission Member comments:

2. **Rebecca Kohlstrand – Planning Board.** She stated that there had been a past emphasis on connections; she wants to see sidewalks and roadways – things that were talked about before in the process. She hopes to see that in the new designs coming before the Planning Board.
3. **President Ashcraft.** She stated that she wants Target to be architecturally compatible and look like a building on the waterfront. We do not have to settle for standard Target designs. She commended the design of the new Davis Target and added that she heard there was also a good one in Napa. The backs of the buildings should not be facing the water. She asked Mr. Whiskeman: Are there any unknowns left? Will we be blindsided like we were with Clif Bar? Has Catellus done their due diligence? She wants the answers next time.
4. **Justin Harrison – EDC.** He asked about the number of affordable housing units in the project. Mr. Whiskeman responded 25 units right now.
5. **Patrick Lynch – Planning Board.** It is challenging for a business to be oriented to the waterfront and cited problems at Bridgeside. We should not be setting expectations now – the Planning Department should study this.

ADJOURNMENT

President Ashcraft thanked everyone and officially adjourned the meeting at 9:58 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Rosemary Valeska
EDC Recording Secretary

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